Facts and Resources on Child Firearm Suicide

Gun violence has a devastating impact on children in America. In fact, 40 percent of child gun deaths are suicides—nearly 700 child gun suicides each year.¹ One study showed that over 80 percent of children under the age of 18 who died by gun suicide used a gun belonging to a parent or relative.² For people of all ages, access to a gun increases the risk of death by suicide by three times.³

Most people who attempt suicide do not die—unless they use a gun.⁴ In fact, 90 percent of suicide attempts with a gun result in death—a much higher fatality rate than any other means of self-harm.⁵ This contributes to the fact that 40 percent of child suicides involve a gun.⁶

A national survey of high school students found that 17 percent had seriously considered attempting suicide within the last year.⁷ And one study showed that 41 percent of adolescents in gun-owning households report having “easy access” to the guns in their home.⁸

Signs to look out for when concerned that a loved one may be suicidal:⁹
  ● Prolonged sadness and depression
  ● Changes in mood or behavior
  ● Hopelessness
  ● Sleeping too much or too little
  ● Withdrawing/Isolation
  ● Aggression or agitation
  ● Increased alcohol or drug use
  ● Talking about killing themselves

Research shows that secure firearm storage is associated with a decreased risk of child firearm suicide. One study showed that households that locked both firearms and ammunition had a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries among children and teenagers.¹⁰ The risk of gun violence and self-harm have grown during the COVID-19 pandemic, with kids experiencing increased levels of stress and isolation, and more guns being purchased. These factors make it even more important that firearms are stored securely.

Some additional key steps you can take to support your loved one include: inviting an honest conversation, listening and supporting your loved one, and encouraging them to see a mental health professional or a primary care physician.¹¹

Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Call 1-800-273-8255. Available 24 hours a day.

Trevor Project, the LGBTQ youth suicide prevention line
Call TrevorLifeline at 1-866-488-7386.

Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in the United States, anytime, about any type of crisis.
1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of most recent available data: 2015 to 2019. Children aged 0 to 17.
6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of most recent available data: 2015 to 2019. Analysis includes children aged 0 to 17.